

## **CHAIRMAN'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH**

The following letter was sent by DR. M. MANZOOR ALAM, Chairman of IOS to President George W. Bush on November 27, 2004. It was delivered at White House on November 30, but no reply was received till February 3, 2005.

President George W. Bush  
White House, Washington DC  
United States of America

Sir,

This is to congratulate you on your winning a second term of office as well as to express a few apprehensions. By virtue of your being the US president you happen to be the most powerful man on earth, a man who is capable of changing the world for the better, or (God forbid) for worse.

I feel encouraged to write to you because I, as the head of a non-profit organisation based in New Delhi, have come across visiting Americans who give us the impression that your administration likes to interact with Muslims and receive feedback from them on US foreign policy.

In the recent past our institute has hosted interactive sessions with and guest lectures by visiting American scholars. Though we cannot possibly claim to have identical views at this stage, we welcome such interaction because it allows the two sides to ventilate their points of view.

Mr President, in most parts of Asia the US has been traditionally not seen as a colonial power. This has particularly been the case in the Subcontinent and West Asia. Even at the height of colonialism this part of the world did not view America as a colonial oppressor. The land of Lincoln and Jefferson had an entirely different image from that of colonial powers.

Of late this image has begun to change, which is a matter of great concern to us. We have been aware of America's power, but we have also been aware of America's generosity of spirit and its aversion to meddling with other people's lives or coveting other people's territory. The US has been one giant which generally refrained from using its power like a brute.

America's power was moderated by compassion, vision and understanding. What we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq somehow does not fit in with our idea of an America that favours fairplay, international rule of law, and a just global order. What is happening in Fallujah reminds us of My Lai in Vietnam and the Wounded Knee in America's formative years.

Do we expect a reversal of the familiar pattern? Is America planning to be a colonial power at a time we thought colonialism was a phenomenon of the past? We have reason to feel concerned when we see reports of American excesses at Abu Ghraib, Najaf and Fallujah. How do we reconcile all this with your administration's reassurances that America does not mean any ill to the Muslim world?

We are encouraged to hear from your administration that an independent Palestinian state would be a reality within four years. Although we have heard such promises earlier also, we would like to believe that this time round your administration is serious about it.

As far as we understand, it is going to be a demilitarised state, with its borders under Israeli control, the Palestinians denied the right to return to their homes, and the Palestinian state territory lacking contiguity. The Muslim world as a whole, the Arabs in general, and most Palestinians in particular, would welcome even such an excuse of a state.

We are told you are a religious-minded person. That gives us some assurance, because we regard ourselves as part of the larger Abrahamic tradition, which we share with you, besides, of course, our common humanity. Keeping that in mind, we hope that you would see to it that the holy Bible's stance "The meek shall inherit the earth" is not changed to "the weak of the earth shall be disinherited".

On our part, as a community of believers we are constantly reminded of our special ties to the followers of other Abrahamic faiths – Judaism and Christianity (people of the Book). The holy Quran asks Muslims:

Say: "O people  
of the Book! Come  
To common terms  
As between us and you:  
That we worship  
None but God"

All that you have to do is be just. The responsibility for justice is part of the power that God has blessed you with.

With great regards and best wishes for a fruitful second term,

Yours sincerely

Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam  
Chairman Institute of Objective Studies